DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 090 579 CS 201 261

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TITLE Individualized Instruction: A Shift in Perspective.
PUB DATE May 74
NOTE 23p.; Keynote address for the Workshop on Teaching Composition at Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina, May 10, 1974

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS College Freshmen; *Composition (Literary); Higher Education; *Individualized Instruction; Junior Colleges; Literature Reviews; *Program Descriptions; *Remedial Instruction; *Teaching Techniques; Tutoring

ABSTRACT

Contained in this document are some significant research references, suggestions for materials useful in individualized instruction, and a rational and description of a freshman writing program for college students needing remedial help. Some of the problems faced by composition teachers are presented, followed by a literature review of research materials aimed at increasing the teacher's knowledge of the student's writing difficulties. To help students learn to write effectively, emphasis is placed on an understanding of grammar and syntax. The comprehension function of language interrelated with theory is stressed so that students experience building their knowledge in sequential steps. Several examples of the instructional materials used in the program are discussed, and the efforts to individualize instruction through the use of tutors are explained. (RB)

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INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION: A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

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I am firm.

You are obstinate.

He is a pig-headed fool.

Bertrand Russell once gave these statements as the conjugation of an "irregular" verb on a British Broadcasting radio program. Shortly afterward, The New Statesman and Nation offered prizes to readers who sent in other "irregular" verbs of this kind and then published the following:

I am sparkling. You are unusally talkative. He is drunk.

I am beautiful. You have good features. She isn't bad-looking, if you like the type.

I am a creative writer. You have a journalistic flair. He is a prosperous hack. (Hayakawa, S.I. Language in Thought and Action. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964, p. 96.)

Not only do these "conjugations" demonstrate connotation of words, but they are also examples of our preoccupation with ourselves and of our differences in perception--the way we see the world. Another example of these differences is the drawing by W. E. Hill, a cartoonist. He entitled it "My Wife and My Mother-in-law." (Hill, W. E., "My Wife and My Mother-in-law," Puck, November 6, 1915.) As you look at the picture, do you see the young wife? Or do you see the mother-in-law? If you find both of them, then try to see one, then the other, alternating rapidly, until finally you see both of them at the same time. It is this kind of flexibility all of us have to develop if we are to come near to understanding what another person's world is like. In our classrooms we have to see not only the group of twenty-five to fifty students before us, but we have to see each one of them and know each one of them individually. In most classes, even when students have been assigned to

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them by placement test scores, we find a wide range of academic backgrounds, abilities, and motivation. Some write fluently and effectively with very little help, but others can hardly put a single word on paper. Our challenge then is to help them to become effective writers. We can accomplish this goal by identifying students' individual needs, determining what a writing course should be, and organizing a tutoring program.

After teaching conventional classes in paragraph writing for three years, I became thoroughly disenchanted because I ended each semester knowing that I had not been able to reach some of the students--those who probably needed my help the most. Although I had made appointments with them to see me after class or in my office, they seldom came. Their writing was extremely poor, in some cases, illiterate. Looking back now, I realize that many probably could not read satisfactorily or understand many of the words I spoke.

My feelings of frustration were not unique. My colleagues were having similar experiences. The only way to give these students the instruction they needed was to place them in a course introductory to the paragraph writing course. In 1969, then, I began teaching sentence writing, a nine-week session that consisted of two one-hour lectures a week to 150 students at one time, and then meeting an additional six hours a week with groups of 50 for two hours with each group.

After a long, unsuccessful search to find a simple, yet detailed, published text, I wrote the first version of Commanding Communication, my text, which was published this year as Commanding Sentences by Scott, Foresman and Company. It consisted of eighteen lessons, exercises, a pretest and a post-test based on instructional objectives. I also produced 350 transparencies that I used during lectures as I discussed aspects of language. The lessons were actually notes, mimeographed for the students, together with blanks for

them to fill in after I had explained a concept. By showing them the answer on a transparency, I was able to give them feedback immediately so that they could correct their notes and then use them as a basis for doing the exercise following the lesson.

About a third of the students could keep up with the lectures and seemed to enjoy them. But the remaining two-thirds needed much more help. As a result, I arranged with a friend of mine at California State University, Sacramento, to send upper division and graduate students to act as tutors during two workshop sessions a week. Most of the students did well with this individual help, but there was still a large enough number who could not comprehend what I was explaining during the lecture that I knew I needed a solution. It was simple. I discarded lectures completely the next year and devoted twelve hours a week to the workshop sessions.

As I became very sensitive to the discomfort and discontent of students, I continued making changes and adjusting requirements to fit their needs, but I was careful not to be swayed by their every whim and, as a result, deprive them of the firm support and guidance they needed to continue in the course. About the time I was experiencing some success and resolving problems, three men--Robert Frew, Richard Guches, and Robert Mehaffy--joined our staff in the fall of 1970 and tried individualized instruction in paragraph writing. By the spring semester they had written units about selecting and limiting topics for paragraphs and writing thesis statements and various kinds of paragraphs. They began with a review of sentence writing--actually a summary of my course, as we were to discover later--and ended with the writing of an expository essay. They, too, dispensed with lectures and chose instead to work with students individually by acting as tutors themselves and using students as tutors. Gradually several of our other colleagues have joined us in this program.

What has happened is that all of us function as tutors and diagnosticians. By testing, observation, and evaluation, we watch each student's progress or lack of it and decide what his next step should be. A student not doing well in paragraph writing may come into my class for help, or I might encourage a student to try paragraph writing, especially after he has completed the first six units in my text. I might mention at this point that our students are placed where they can function best either by scores on our placement test or on a writing pretest I wrote with Bob Mehaffy. Of the 1,500 students entering, about one-third are ready for essay writing and two-thirds need extra help. Of the two-thirds approximately one-fourth go into the sentence writing course and the remainder into the paragraph writing course. If we discover later in the semester that students are misplaced, we move them immediately into the course where they belong.

In a seven-semester period approximately 1,200 students enrolled in the sentence writing course. Almost half completed the course. Of this group about two-thirds completed one or more of our other writing courses. An additional one-sixth of the total number enrolled but did not complete sentence writing; however, they did complete one or more of our writing courses. We had, then, about a 60 percent completion rate. Approximately forty percent withdrew or received no credit. In this period many students enrolled two, three, four, even five times because they can work at their own pace, and they can enter and leave as they choose. Sometimes they enter, try working a few weeks but drop out, usually because they "hate" English and cannot make themselves learn anything about it. When they express such intense dislike, I let them pour out their feelings and then try to help them see that whether they take the course or not is entirely their decision. If they are not ready at the time, they can return at any future time. Some will stay after they have shared their frustrations with me, but some will leave and return the next semester or a year or two later. When they return, they tell me that they are really going to work hard, and they usually do.

This kind of flexibility is extremely important to help students realize they can and must make decisions for themselves. Sometimes it takes a long time for them to arrive at this point, especially those whose self-concept is very low. They have to learn how to study, how to determine when they have prepared themselves sufficiently for the tests at the end of each of the nine units in the course, and how to face these Unit Reviews without apprehension. They can develop a positive attitude toward their learning experience and acquire motivation if they are helped to experience success as they do the lessons covering single concepts in each unit. If they do not experience a series of little successes, they give up quickly because they have proved to themselves once again they are stupid; their only course of action is to drop the course. They are very different from the adequately motivated students who work largely by themselves or in small groups and who do not hesitate to ask questions when they need help.

The reasons why some students feel inadequate are many. Frequently their personal problems interfere with their being students. For example, a young man limped into class on a Thursday and hoped I would excuse his absence on Monday and Tuesday because he had been shot in the leg that preceding weekend. He assured me that he was getting along well. Women with families either have sick children or trouble getting a baby sitter or serious financial problems. Men frequently tell me that their homes are so noisy that they have no place to study except in my classroom or the library. I sometimes wonder how these people can ever get enough time to concentrate on being students.

Others have been educationally deprived, and the results can be devastating. However, they can learn to write competently if they learn grammar and syntax as a basis for understanding how language functions and how they can then manipulate it to serve their purposes. Among the growing number who advocate a guided

course of study is John C. Mellon, for example, who has found that practice with specific structures, even though students may not remember formal names, improves their ability to write fairly complex sentences. They have to learn about constructions which usually appear in written, not spoken, language. He reported his findings in his NCTE Research Report No. 10. The late Francis Christensen also used a patterned approach to examining and generating sentences. In his article "The Course in Advanced Composition for Teachers," (College Composition and Communication, May, 1973, p. 165), he emphasized the need for a better understanding of sentences and paragraphs "based on grammar and focused on rhetorical function." Many teachers, linguists, and professors in teacher-training colleges have pointed to the necessity of students having some general knowledge of grammar so that they can use a dictionary efficiently, punctuate with confidence, and study a foreign language without having to be taught the characteristics and functions of English first.

These teachers also recognize individual differences in abilities to use language. The reasons for these differences are explored in Psycholinguistics (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1970) by James Deese, who looks at language from the linguistic, psychological, and sociological viewpoints. Beginning with the statement that "a language is a set of sentences," (p. 1) he traces the development of language from infancy to adulthood and emphasizes several times the need for adult stimulation in the growth of a child's normal linguistic function. Without it, he says, "children are retarded both in linguistic and motor development. Special training for these children later on seems to help make up some but not all the defect." (p. 63) He discusses a 1961 study by Basil Bernstein, English sociologist, who found that middle and upper class people use what he calls a formal style--careful speech, highly structured, because these people play intellectual games with language." As a result, it

becomes analytic as well as descriptive and deals with abstractions in intricate detail. In contrast, restricted or public language--the speech mode of the lower class with a limited syntax--serves mainly for descriptions, and speakers, having little motivation to make meaning clear, find it difficult to state analytic arguments and abstractions within its limits. Deese questions whether Bernstein exaggerates the possible stylistic differences but concedes that there are gradations of style which can be characterized by the two extremes. (pp. 79-80) It would seem, then, that the student from the middle or upper class family would do well writing spontaneously and discovering his own style because he has lived with and used a language with which he can express his ideas. The deprived student, on the other hand, has limited language experience to call upon when he tries to write his thoughts. He may know what he feels and wants to say, but he experiences great frustration because he cannot begin to put the necessary words on paper. This is the student, then, who can profit from the guided approach if he wants to learn.

Deese substantiates this idea as he discusses a study by Lenneberg (1967), who concluded, after gathering evidence of the effects of brain damage on linguistic abilities, that the primary development of language comes to an end some time around puberty and that further changes in language are entirely the result of learning. Lenneberg says further that a person who has not acquired the ability to use language effectively by his middle twenties probably will never acquire it. (p. 58)

In comparing the language of children and adults, Deese discusses findings of other studies. One, for example, is that children's early sentences are short because the children's memory span is short. Even though adults produce long, complicated sentences, children are able to understand them by simplifying them, breaking them down into smaller parts. However, Deese points out, "The

development of elaborate sentence structure is a necessity." (p. 69) The growing child adds more and more words to his sentences just as the traveler feels the need to learn more of a foreign language because the phrase book becomes very limiting. He says, in addition, that ". . . the motivation for elaboration of syntactic structures is not so much functional as it is simply the result of internal pressure to that for which the species is natively adapted." (p. 70)

This internal pressure may account in part for the motivation many students have when they enter a writing class for acquiring new techniques to make their papers effective. Many of them tell me that they want to sound like professional writers. They can if they learn to use constructions seldom found in spoken language. According to Andrew MacLeish, University of Minnesota, these include participial modifiers, infinitive and absolute phrases, and noun clauses at the beginning of a sentence to embed an idea rather than express it in a subordinate clause or another sentence, and students may accomplish greater economy by using nonrestrictive modifiers and appositives. Pointing out that speaking and writing are fundamentally different, MacLeish says that "the writer has an obligation to great accuracy; the reader demands more exactness because writing is edited and permanent. Speech, on the other hand, is unplanned, improvised, and temporary. We can conclude, then, that only immature writing follows patterns of spoken English. To 'write as you hear it and speak it' is not altogether a good maxim....Thus, the interference of speech in writing is one of the major problems in composition teaching....Accordingly the composition course must impart specific skills in using devices employed in good written English. Without giving editing priority over the more basic process of free writing, the composition teacher should aim at increasing sensitivity to structure and to alternatives to structure." (MacLeish, Andrew. "Some

Structures for Written English," English Journal, September, 1969, pp. 877-891.)

Another benefit of this guided learning of grammar and syntax is that students can improve and enlarge their reading comprehension by using syntactic clues. In discussing an unpublished study on the recall of sentences, conducted by Dr. Roger Wales of the University of Edinburgh in 1964, I. M. Schlesinger said Dr. Wales presented sentences in three parts, divided in two ways, to his subjects and tested their comprehension of each kind. This is an example:

(1) The very old man
was always sitting down
on one of the big chairs.

(2) The very old
man was always sitting
down on one of the big chairs.

In the first example, the first line is the subject man and its modifiers; the second line is the verb was sitting and two adverbial modifiers always and down, and the last one is two prepositional phrases on one and of the big chairs. In the second version the subject man was moved to the second line with the verb was sitting and the adverb always, and the adverb down was moved to the third line. Dr. Wales found that sentences "were significantly easier to learn when presented as in (1) than when presented as in (2). Apparently, it is easier to store in memory units in which a sentence is normally decoded, i.e., the syntactical constituents which form the parts presented in (1)." (Schlesinger, I. M. Sentence Structure and the Reading Process. The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton & Co. N.V., Publishers, 1968, p. 27.)

In his own experiments Schlesinger found that a person's understanding of a word group as well as his recognition of the grammatical units is important for comprehension. (p. 43) In addition, he learned that long sentences may be

troublesome, especially for beginning readers, but that short sentences can be difficult to read because they seem to be "cut up." (p. 79) In another experiment he learned that indiscriminately simplifying complex sentences may cause reading problems because the reader cannot link or consolidate ideas the way the writer can if the writer shows these relationships by using appropriate grammatical units and structure signal words. (p. 119) One other investigation he reports pertains to a stylistic factor--beginning sentences with what he calls "semantically indeterminate words, words that do not give the reader an immediate clue about what the sentence is saying." (pp. 142-143) He gives this sentence as an example:

> After addressing the House of Commons, Mr. Churchill
> left for a meeting with the Chief of Staff.

He points out that the subject of addressing is unknown to the reader until he gets to the main part of the sentence and reads Mr. Churchill. If, however, the sentence were written like this,

> After Mr. Churchill addressed the House of Commons, he
> left for a meeting with the Chief of Staff.

the reader's recognition and comprehension would occur more rapidly as he reads, "After Mr. Churchill addressed . . ." (p. 143) Obviously, these kinds of syntactic clues and others, such as recognizing prepositions, conjunctions, and subordinators so that they read word groups instead of single words, are usable if students learn characteristics and function of language.

To help students learn grammar and syntax, I stress the understanding of the function of language and interrelate the theory so that the students experience building their knowledge in small, sequential steps. I must emphasize that I am not teaching grammar in the traditional way. Instead I constantly relate their learning of grammar to sentences which they either analyze or generate themselves. This approach is similar to that used by music teachers who give students little songs to play as soon as they begin their study and then add related practice exercises so that they can learn theory as well. In addition, I ask students to spend at least four hours a week in class so that they get continuing practice just as they do when they take music lessons. Those who come sporadically are bored by going back over lessons they had read but remember in unusable fragments.

To develop the sequential steps I spent the first two years listening to students' responses to the exercises I had written and learning where these exercises or individual sentences were not in a logical sequence for the students' clear understanding. For example, the first version had passive verbs with transitive verbs in a very early lesson in the book. Students could understand transitive verbs but found passive verbs impossible. By the time they get to Unit Seven in the present text, they are able to cope with passive verbs. Another segment moved to a later part of the book was the lesson on fragments. Originally they were discussed with sentence errors--comma fault (splice) and run-ons--in the section on coordination; however, because fragments are often dependent clauses and verbal phrases, students could not understand them and how to revise them. Parallel structure also had been in the unit on coordination, but very few were able to write parallel structures even though they could write compound sentences. As a result, parallel structures are discussed in detail toward the end of the book where they seem to present no major problem. Another stumbling block was verbals and verbal phrases. Since these constructions now follow the unit on subordination, most students work with them easily because they have learned to combine ideas and to make an independent clause a phrase or a dependent clause.

In addition, I wrote and rewrote exercises to give students experience with single concepts. For example, I originally had an exercise in which students were to identify adjectives and adverbs. One student told me that he could learn more easily if he could find only adverbs first. I rewrote the exercise by dividing it into two parts so that he could find adjectives in one part and adverbs in another part. By the time he had finished these exercises he was able to find both adjectives and adverbs in one sentence. He could see their relationship to the words they were modifying. To help him even further, I showed him how he could use the basic sentence patterns to identify the nouns and verbs first; the remaining words then were modifiers which he could label. Another student, a conscientious middle-aged man, pointed out in an exercise on punctuation with compound sentences that I had included one with three independent clauses instead of the usual two. He felt that this sentence at that point was confusing. I immediately moved it to the next exercise on punctuation with words in a series.

This kind of detail may seem inconsequential to many people, especially to those who have always used language easily and who believe that students should be able to read an explanation and then look at an unlabeled example and match the explanation to the example; however, students with deficient language backgrounds cannot cope with this kind of abstraction. If they cannot get an explanation which they can understand, their only alternative is to give up or become hostile. They must have each step in the thought process listed, labeled, and demonstrated as concretely as possible. Then they must have the opportunity immediately to apply what they have learned. In other words, using the order of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, they must experience recognition and acquire knowledge as they study the lessons; then in doing the exercises they must apply this information. In later exercises which combine two or more concepts they learn to analyze and thus acquire a working knowledge of what language is and how it functions. The result is that they eventually can relate ideas to one another in long sentences that they write, and they can read complicated pieces of writing with comprehension.

Because I agree with James Deese that language is a set of sentences, I begin my course by defining a sentence. I explain that it is a simple declarative statement that has a subject and a predicate. Next, I show students how to identify verbs and nouns within sentences by using simple tests. Immediately afterward they apply these tests to word groups to determine whether they are sentences; and then they learn the first two sentence patterns, one with the intransitive verb and the other with the transitive verb and direct object. One lesson demonstrates the combining of two sentences by eliminating unnecessary words and writing either a compound subject or a compound predicate. Other lessons give detailed explanations of and experience with nouns and verbs, the basic elements of sentences. In two lessons I introduce Sentence Keys, a method of analyzing sentences which students memorize as it is developed in the first three units. Only by recognizing subject and verb can they find their way in the maze of phrases and clauses that make up later sentences. By the time they finish this unit, they understand the simple sentence well.

Then they are ready for modifiers--adjectives and adverbs--discussed in the second unit. I stress that they are additions to the basic sentence patterns and show the relationship of these modifiers to the nouns and verbs in the sentence. I am not merely discussing the parts of speech in isolation and hoping by some magic happening that students will understand the relationship of all these parts to the whole sentence. Instead I constantly relate the parts to a structure.

The third unit covers the remaining sentence patterns and provides a summary of all the sentence patterns and Sentence Keys for analyzing sentences. It gives details about the differences between indirect object and object complement and establishes the foundation for using objective case of the pronoun for the indirect object, although case is not mentioned.

The fourth unit on coordination is often a test of the student's understanding of basic sentence patterns and simple sentences as he combines these into compound sentences and uses appropriate punctuation. Those who have a firm foundation in using Sentence Keys to find subject-verb combinations move quickly through this unit; those who have not accepted the need to be consistent in learning about language have to review lessons in the first three units, and often must go back to Noun Tests and Verb Tests, before they can complete the unit successfully. This unit demonstrates very well that learning is not linear for most people and that they must be helped to acquire a sequential pattern.

The fifth unit on pronouns and subject-verb agreement, by contrast with preceding units, appears to be easy for most students even if their oral usage of pronouns does not follow the written conventions. By using the charts and identifying the forms of pronouns as noun substitutes--Noun subject, Noun subject complement, Noun direct object, Noun indirect object, Noun object complement, Noun object of the preposition--in sentence patterns, they accept using the objective case as object of the preposition or indirect object even if it sounds strange to them in such sentences as *Dan gave Dick and I (me) tickets to the game. They learn to recognize that the objective form fits into the sentence pattern in that slot. Those who have problems with subject-verb agreement often resolve their difficulties by reviewing prepositional phrases and singular and plural forms of verbs in present and present perfect tenses.

The sixth unit on subordination is another test of the students' understanding of subject-verb combinations in independent clauses. Once again, those who have good understanding move through this unit comfortably because they understand how to use subordinating conjunctions and relative pronouns to relate an idea to an independent clause. Those who struggle need review of Sentence Keys and basic sentence patterns. In addition, they have to learn to accept a word group--a dependent clause--as a modifier or as a noun. The students who get to this point but continue to struggle

are the ones who learn for the moment, who learn items in isolation. Usually their problem is not inability to understand but a reluctance to exert themselves to build a framework of reference. They acquire, for fleeting moments, bits and pieces but never a usable whole. The way I help them is to answer their questions by showing them the earlier lessons which contain the information they should know if they expect to understand the system of language.

The seventh unit, covering passive verbs, verbals, and sentence editing, is the beginning of the last third of the book, a section which helps students refine their writing by revising and editing with confidence. After they have learned how and why to subordinate one idea to another, they work well with verbal phrases and enjoy them. For many it is a high point in the course because their writing begins to sound more like that of professional writers. Those who have difficulty have to review verb parts to learn about present participles and gerunds, past participles, and infinitives. In addition, a detailed examination of verb forms helps them see that the past participle, used without the auxiliary verb, functions as a modifier. Those who continue to be bewildered by verbal phrases have not learned to evaluate ideas in relation to one another. It is necessary to give them more experience with combining sentences, either by giving them additional exercises or by having them write sentences of their own.

The eighth unit on punctuation and capitalization is definitely a measure of a student's accomplishment. If he can use a comma with a conjunction or a semicolon between two independent clauses, or if he can use a comma confidently after an introductory adverbial clause, he evidently has acquired concrete information about language and the conventions of written language. It functions as a review of all the punctuation the student has learned in the first seven units.

The last unit, covering point of view, parallelism and editing, provides the final touches for effective writing. Students who have difficulty with point of view examine again verb forms and pronouns. If parallel structure bewilders them, they review

coordination. They sometimes lose sight of the fact that parallel structures have equal value, but the unit on coordination seems to refresh their approach to evaluating ideas and balancing them in parallel structures. By the time they get to the last lessons in which they edit sentences, they are usually fairly relaxed about depending on their own judgment to determine whether their sentences are satisfactory. But there are always some who continue to ask what is correct or incorrect, and they have to be told patiently that there are many possible versions of every sentence and that what is finally written depends on what the writer himself wants to say.

At the end of each unit are X-TRAS, optional exercises for more experience with application of the concepts. In addition, I provide supplementary exercises which students may do for even more practice. Some of them do all of these in preparation for the Unit Reviews, which test their mastery of the concepts in the unit. If they get 85 percent on Form A, they go on to the next unit. If they get less than 85 percent on Form A, they correct it by reviewing lessons and getting help from the tutors or me. When they feel they are prepared, they take Form B. Most students get 85 percent easily on Form B. I do not average the students' grades in determining the final grade. At any time during the semester I can say that a student is earning at least a B because he has had to earn 85 percent on each Unit Review before going on to the next one. There is no reason to penalize them by averaging in low scores. Each Unit Review is an inventory of what the students have accomplished and what they have yet to learn. For those who believe they are failures when they receive 65 or 75 percent, I point out that they have to learn only another 10 or 20 percent to master the unit.

The students are under no pressure to complete these Unit Reviews in a certain length of time because we are testing their knowledge, not their speed. If they cannot complete the Unit Review in an hour, they can turn the test in to the test monitor and return the next day to finish it. If they suddenly cannot remember anything when they face the test, they may turn it in, go out to study, then return when they feel they

are ready to take the test. When they take some of the later tests in which they write fairly complicated sentences of their own, I encourage them to look at their tests the next day and reread the sentences. If they wish to rewrite, they may. I want them to feel that their work represents the best that they can do before I examine it. The reason for my concern is that many students face tests with great apprehension -- uncalled for apprehension. We have had a few men and women burst into tears as they finally decide to take the first Unit Review, even though we have worked closely with them and know that they are well prepared. The point is that they do not know they are prepared, and they do not want to prove to themselves again that they are failures. I sometimes help them relieve some of this tension by working with them through Form A with the understanding that they will complete Form B by themselves. In addition, I urge all students to use a dictionary as they work on the Unit Review. They soon realize that I expect them to learn to apply the concepts but not to memorize every single detail, such as knowing all noun plural forms or irregular verb forms. The result of what some people derisively call "babying" is that these students prove to themselves that they are capable of learning to write effectively. When they finally get insight into what grammar and syntax is all about, they frequently ask why some one did not them that "it was so easy."

Once the students gain control of writing sentences, they seem to write any number of their own confidently. The first of two big hurdles they next face as they enter the composition course is learning to organize their ideas for writing paragraphs and essays. As a result, we work on the writing of topic sentences and thesis statements and relating development to these structures. An effective approach -- one that Francis Christensen developed -- is gaining an understanding of levels of generality to see the relationship of ideas. With practice they soon write acceptable topic sentences and thesis statements.

The second hurdle is thinking of topics to write about. Here is where individualized instruction is especially effective. Using a combination of

Aristotle's topics of invention and the who, what, when, where, why and how that journalists ask, I ask the student what his interests are or what course he enjoys the most. When he names a topic, I ask him to write it down. Then I ask him more questions about the topic to develop specific details, and he writes these down. It is very easy, then, to show him that he has generated the elements for a thesis statement and an outline of his paper. The first time students do this they look at the paper with wide-eyed astonishment, and they become very enthusiastic about beginning their writing or going to the library to get specific information. The next time many can organize their papers themselves, but some want to experience this guided approach each time they begin a paper. Either they work with the tutors or me or with their friends.

This one-to-one contact is invaluable for the teacher as well. In talking with the students and reading their rough drafts, I can be the audience or the editor, trying to understand what the writer is saying. I can help them clarify points, develop coherence, and revise sentences simply by exchanging ideas with them. I do not proofread their papers. I might mention that I see a pronoun reference problem or a misplaced modifier or a misspelled word. If they do not understand what I am talking about, we refer to an appropriate section in the lessons I have prepared or to a dictionary. What I am trying to help them learn is how to use handbooks and references to gain insight and understanding instead of depending on a teacher to get an answer to a single problem or question. With this kind of guidance, they learn how to prepare an effective essay, and they leave the class confident that they can write papers for any of their other classes.

An important part of this program is instructional aides so that students can get individual help when they need it. Individualized instruction can operate without aides if the course materials are well developed and the teacher has only ten students. But if enrollment is not limited and if students needs help several times during the class hour, they, not the individualized instruction program, set the demand for instructional aides.

My aides, the tutors come from several sources, and they are for the most part unpaid. As I mentioned earlier, my first tutors were students from California State University, Sacramento. The first year was ideal because I had one tutor for each six to ten students. But when other community colleges in the area learned about my program and also wanted tutors, I could get only about half the number that I needed. However, at the same time, I discovered that tutors could be recruited from among the students in composition and literature courses at American River College. Now, as my colleagues and I teach these courses, we are perpetually on the lookout for students we think would make good tutors. Then, at the end of the semester, we take these students aside and invite them to help us during the next semester. Flattery, we have found, is the best approach. And we have encouraged our other colleagues to recommend promising prospects because the instructors of remedial writing classes who do not teach advanced composition and literature must look to other instructors as a source of tutors.

At first I enrolled my tutors in an Independent Studies program for which they received college credit. Then I developed a course called Teacher Aides in English, which the tutors now enroll in. In one semester 60 to 65 students register. But once again, I soon learned that my supply of tutors was limited. One reason was that not all students wanted to tutor in my classes, though they did want to tutor in the paragraph, composition, or reading classes. Another reason was that my colleagues decided that they too would like to have tutors in their classes.

As our programs at American River College have grown, we have needed more help. We are able to get some paid tutors through our Tutoring Center. In addition we have paid "paraprofessionals." This is a classification of an instructional aide made possible by the California Fong Bill (AB1171) which permits use of instructional aides in the classroom with or without a teacher present. We have found our programs strengthened because we have someone we can count on to handle some of the paper work and to act as liaison among our other colleagues--eighteen of them--who are now working

in the program. We are freed to work with the students individually, and we are able to answer the tutor's questions as they arise.

Although the paid instructional aide should be well educated, tutors do not have to be experts to be competent. In fact, several of my tutors have been former students in my classes. The instructor working with tutors has to realize that he is taking on another kind of student when he acquires a tutor. If he cannot accept the tutor in this way, he will feel the program is not working.

The best approach for the tutor is to let him try to function as a teacher and leader with a small group or individual students and to learn to relate to the students individually. As he is forced to answer questions and to find enough words to explain a point, he quickly realizes what his responsibilities are. Because my materials are complete, the tutors are able to find answers to most of their questions in the lessons and by using the index. In just two weeks those who have not taken the course themselves are able to go through the units and to answer questions easily for the first six units. Usually I have to help them with the lesson on verbal phrases.

Even though tutors may have had extensive preparation in their subject, they are apprehensive as they begin tutoring because they take their responsibility to the students seriously. Often they are unsure of themselves because they do not know what to expect in the classroom. The apprehension sometimes lasts only a week or two, or it may increase for a week or two and then gradually subside. By the end of the first month it is usually gone.

As the apprehension subsides, most tutors become exhilarated, as if they have conquered a mountain peak. Their exhilaration may alternate with doubt as they find they do not know every answer or as certain students do not respond or progress at the rate the tutor thinks is appropriate. Frequently they arrange to meet students extra hours because they want the students to succeed. For some the experience is a turning point. If they have been considering teaching as a profession, they either become dedicated to teaching or decide emphatically that teaching is not for them.

The experience is also excellent for any student, business majors, for example, who may be in a supervisorial position later on.

The tutors I have had have ranged in age from eighteen-year-olds, new to college, to men and women in their fifties and sixties. Many of the women who have children of their own relate well to the students. The men who have retired from military service are effective. They appear to be quietly authoritative, yet show sincere concern for the students having extreme difficulty. The young men are appealing to the female students and relate well to the male students. The young women sometimes allow themselves to be belittled by male students who try to make the girls scurry around and serve them. All of them, however, fulfill the students' need for a group leader.

As I place students as tutors in other classes, I try to make sure that they have adequate backgrounds for what they will teach. If the tutors want to work in the composition or reading courses, I find out whether they have completed these courses themselves. They are much more satisfied with their experience when they are fairly well prepared, and they do not burden the instructor.

Although we have been able to work well with tutors who are only adequately prepared, we find that the paid instructional aide should be very well trained. Ours are master's degree candidates. As a result, they have had courses like advanced composition and linguistics and are able to grade sentences and paragraphs students originate according to the guidelines we have set. They can be flexible in their approach to what the students have written, and they can talk knowledgeably with students about the papers. They can also answer many of the tutors' questions. In a room of 30 to 50 students, each hour there are many, many questions.

In addition to having tutors work with the students in groups or individually, I ask them to grade at least five Unit Reviews each week so that they learn how my assistant and I evaluate students' responses and can then help students constructively correct their tests. Without this kind of experience tutors sometimes are confused about why a particular answer is wrong and get students upset about the way the tests

have been graded. Once again, it is the application of knowledge in a very practical way that helps the tutor work effectively.

So that the tutors can share their experiences, I meet them as a group for one hour a week. As they talk about their apprehensions, they soon learn that others are experiencing the same feelings. We also review course materials and examine the supplementary exercises the students may complete. They receive B if they attend class and weekly meetings regularly. If they miss class meetings, they are expected to make up their time at other hours. They receive A if they write a summary of their experiences and an appraisal of individualized instruction at the end of the semester. If they have not fulfilled their obligations, they receive I (Incomplete). They earn one unit of credit for attending the weekly meetings and one unit for each 54 hours they spend tutoring during the semester. They can earn a maximum of four units, and they can repeat the course once for the same number of units. To provide flexibility they may earn two to four units each semester. As a result, some earn two units a semester for four semesters.

Instructors who want to teach sentence writing or paragraph writing sign up for sections of each of these courses just as they do for composition or literature courses. At the present time we have four day sections and two evening sections of sentence writing, each of which meets four hours a week. In addition, we have approximately 40 sections of paragraph writing, a three-unit course. When I began my program, I taught three sections of sentence writing by myself. After the three men joined our staff and individualized their sections of paragraph writing, the four of us worked together to consolidate the program for two years. Then gradually our other colleagues, after some of them decided that we are not really the "Fearsome Foursome," joined up. Now we have about 18 working with us. However, about three are still not happy with the program; one of these decided that his world began to fall apart when the "efficiency experts" moved in and has turned in his resignation. The four of us know the program is successful because our classes fill rapidly, and we know that students

ask other instructors why they do not also individualize instruction. The students are convinced that they have a fair chance to complete each course because they get the help they need as they work on each unit.

Although our program is different from those I have heard about as I have attended NCTE and four C's meetings, there are many English teachers who have individualized instruction in their classes successfully. In addition, many teachers in other disciplines, using Dr. Fred Keller's "recipe" for personalized instruction, now work with students individually in many courses. For further information about the work being done by Dr. J. Gilmour Sherman, who is co-founder of PSI with Dr. Keller and now the director of the Center for Personalized Instruction at Georgetown University, you might like to subscribe for the PSI Newsletter to learn about what is happening everywhere.

At the present time my three colleagues and I are making plans to offer two sections of a modular Freshman English program in which students will work on sentence writing, paragraph writing, and essay writing in the same classroom. We are trying this approach so that we can erase completely the stigma of a student having to enroll in a remedial course even though our positive approach in our present program has eliminated the term "bonehead" English completely. Each section will meet six hours a week and have 50 students. We will work in teams of two together with an adequate number of tutors so that all students get as much help as they need every time they come to class. After giving the students our Writing Pretest, we will give them the appropriate course unit and watch their progress. If they have difficulty or find the material too easy, we will simply give them a course unit to match their needs. We anticipate no insurmountable problems. If any problems do arise, we will do what we have done in the past--analyze them and resolve them by using whatever alternatives we think may be satisfactory. If these do not work, we will shift our perspective again and even another time until we have the program running smoothly. We never give up because we know we will find the answer.